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Sr. Simone Campbell stunned by DNC reception

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NCR Today

In this message to her friends and fans, Sr. Simone Campbell reflects on her experience at the Democratic National Convention and her phone call from President Barack Obama afterward. She was especially surprised that the crowd went silent when she gave her talk. She was expecting, she said, the usual hum of conversation that accompanied lower-tier speakers at both conventions.

Dear Friends ... I want to share with you a little reflection on my experience at the DNC. I started this on Saturday to you and just discovered it in the "draft" section of my email. Here is what I wrote:

I'm home and finally with a little time to reflect on the amazing experience of the DNC. It was WAY more powerful than I ever expected. I am exhausted and trying to rest up quickly.

The DNC was AWESOME. I was STUNNED by the reception that I received when I walked out on the stage Wednesday night. Some people were standing before I even said a word. I met so many "former Catholics" and non-believers who support our work and find nourishment from what we have been doing. The second thing that stunned me was that the arena went quiet when I was speaking. I thought it would be as with the other minor speakers where there is a gentle hum of other conversation, but it went silent. I was told later that even the journalists were listening! Even before the speech lots of folks recognized me, but AFTER the speech I couldn't go 2 feet without someone wanting a picture or an autograph! What an experience. Our workshops (Mind the Gap and Nuns on the Bus) went really well. I was honored that Richard Rohr came to both of them and had great things to say about it. We had various DNC delegates and notables who came to be supportive as well as press who wanted interviews. I did non-stop press on Thursday around the workshop. The biggest joy for me was that I did my first taped interview in Spanish

for Tele Mundo!! I am so grateful for being pushed into that.

Secretary Kathleen Sebelius invited me to lunch on Thursday with Sec. Lisa Jackson (sec of EPA) and 2 others at the CNN Cafe. David Gergen stopped by the table and Kathleen introduced me to lots of folks! I was told that I made more ruckus than anyone else with folks wanting their picture with me at CNN! I was talking with a woman there who was from Los Angeles and wanted to help raise money to support our work. I discovered she was from Good Shepherd parish in Beverly Hills which was my first assignment when I was newly professed! Then a young man who was her "people" asked me if I would wait for a moment because former Governor Davis wanted to meet me! Turns out that this woman I had been talking with was his wife and they both want to help us and as Catholics are so grateful for what I did. How humbling.

Then Kathleen Sebelius had been talking to a DNC person and said I needed better credentials because I could not get to their suite on Wednesday night when she had invited me to their suite. But I was happy up in the "nose bleed" section with my people. Later I realized that it was great to be up there because I was with the folks who were happy to have me there and it is who we are representing in this work -- what could be better?? Anyway at one point Broderick came to get me, gave me credentials that could have gotten me on the podium Thursday night!!! And then he asked me if I would go to the "surrogate suite" with him. There all of the leadership (Jim Messina, Michael Strautmanis, Arne Duncan, Ambassador Kirk, Kathleen and TONS of others) wanted to say thank you to me for what I had done. How amazing. Michael Strautmanis said to me the if I needed anything to let him know. I then said something about the people that we had met, etc. and he said that was good that I was focusing on mission, but he wanted me to know that what he meant was personal to me. If I need something personally, let them know! How dear and thoughtful.

Well, so many stories to tell. I'm eager for when we can talk and visit. I am very grateful for the support from so many of you. Without that anchor, it would not have been possible. Thanks you for being part of making this amazing moment happen. I treasure our friendship and look forward to time together. HUGS to you all.

FOLLOW UP? THEN I WROTE THIS ON SATURDAY:

I just wanted to let you know that this afternoon (Saturday) I got a call from the President of the United States!! He said that he called to thank me not just for my talk at the DNC, but he said that what was so important was the work that we have been doing on the bus and before that in our work at NETWORK. He started off by saying that I might be the most popular person in the United States and I said that I hoped not more popular than he is. He then went on to say that he was grateful for our work and for the impact that we have been making this summer and before that in all of the ways that we work for those at the margins. He said that he has always said since the time he was a community organizer that if you really want something done ask the nuns to do it. I thanked him and said that I was SO glad that he had mentioned those in poverty in the Thursday night speech. He said that he hoped that we might be able to sit down soon and talk and I suggested after his inauguration!

I just wanted to share this all with you because each one of you helped to make this happen!! Know that this comes with my fondest care and gratitude that it appears that for at least a little bit we have helped shift our nation. A true gift of the Spirit. The Lord has heard the cry of our people. Let us continue to be the burning bush!

Simone Campbell, SSS, Executive Director
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